

143. 1<sup>st</sup>  
THE  
Souls Return to its God,  
IN  
Life, and at Death.

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A  
Funeral Sermon,  
Preached upon occasion of the Death of  
Mr. JOHN KENT,  
Late of *Crouched Friars*,  
Who Departed this Life Decem. 16. 1689.

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By *Samuel Slater*, Minister of the Gospel.

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1 Thes. 4. 14.  
*Them which sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.*

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L O N D O N,  
Printed for *John Dunton* at the *Black Raven* in the *Poultry*. 1690.



# To my Worthy Friend

## Mrs. MARY KENT.

**A**T your desire this Sermon was preached, and at your repeated desire it is now published. God grant that it may be accompanied, where-ever it shall come, with the Divine Spirit and Blessing, that being so backt and influenced, it may accomplish the thing for which it is thus sent abroad, and prove a singular means of good to precious and immortal Souls. The hand of that God, before whom it becomes the whole Earth to keep silence, hath made a very great breach upon you, by depriving you of your dear and affectionate Husband, whose Life was very desirable unto those that were his acquaintance, but much more to you. The good Lord stand himself in the breach, for he alone is able to make it up, who out of his infinite fulness is able to sweeten all our comforts, to supply all our wants, and to fill up all vacancies, and to do far more abundantly than we can ask or think. It is your wisdom not to stand poring upon your Loss, but to endeavour the turning it into gain: for meat may be fetched out of the eater, and life out of death; that which devours our comforts, may feed our graces. Every thing shall one way or other befriended that person who is indeed a friend to himself. Your Husband is taken from you, and this is heavy upon you, that you shall see his face no more; yet see carefully to this, that you mourn not as one that hath no hope, rather believing that he is gone to a place of peace, rest and happiness; gird up the loins of your mind, and by a diligent speedy preparation of your self, make all the haste you can after him, so you shall see him in a better place, and better state, and more than that, you shall see your God and Saviour too in all his glory, which shall reflect a glory upon you. It may be our comfort to think that it is but a little time which you and I, and the rest of the people of God have to mourn in, and to conflict with Enemies and Troubles in; and if we can through the assistance of grace obtain a Victory over our unruly and imperious lusts, we

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shall

shall find a complete and comfortable deliverance from all our sor-  
rows. Make we it our care and labour to get sin out of our hearts  
and the hand of Infinite Love and Goodness will infallibly wipe  
away all tears from our eyes. My hearts desire and prayer to  
God for you and yours, is, that ye may be saved, and so follow  
those blessed Souls that are gone before, and have through Faith  
and Patience enter'd into the possession of those glorious things  
which are contained in the Promises, and an intimate Communion  
with that God who made them, as that you may be comporportioners  
& fellow-sharers with them. Oh that the prevailing Comforter, whom  
our dearest Lord sent to his Church, may take up his abode with  
you, and do that part of his Office to you in the midst of all your  
disconsolations! May he direct your feet into the way of peace  
and your hearts into the Love of God, and a patient waiting for  
the coming of our Lord, and the day of your Redemption. The  
Lord himself be your Sun and Shield, give you grace and glory  
with whatever else he sees good. May he teach you to live holily  
and to all well-pleasing, and then enable you to die triumphantly.  
To his grace, guidance and blessing I commend you; and as I hope  
find you, so I desire to leave you under the healing and refreshing  
wings of the glorious Sun of Righteousness; My self remaining,

From my Study,  
Jan. 24. 1690.

Yours in our most precious Jesus

Samuel Slater.



Pfaln



Psalm 116. 7.

*Return unto thy Rest, O my Soul! for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.*

**T**HE words before us are part of a Psalm of Praise (in which we have reason to conclude *David's* heart well tun'd, and wound up to an high pitch of Thankfulness) and therefore may by some be looked upon as somewhat improper for a Funeral Occasion and Solemnity. But for the silencing and satisfaction of such as may so judge; I shall only say, this was the Scripture, upon which the heart of our deceased Friend and Brother was much set, and in the time of his health he did frequently mention it as the subject of that Sermon which should be Preached after his departure out of this World into an Eternal State; and if I am not greatly mistaken, it will freely and plentifully afford matter very fit for you to be entertained with at such a time as this: For though when a Child of God dieth, there is just cause of mourning among his Friends and dear Relations, and in the Church of God, of which he was a living Member, not upon his account, who is an unspeakable gainer, but their own, who are sensible of a great loss, yet surely it ought to be such a mourning, as doth not exclude joy as a thing with which it is utterly inconsistent, because we are by the Word of Truth assured, that the day of such an ones death, is better than the day of his birth; and in the midst of those tears which are shed, there may be triumphs because of a blessed and glorious Victory that is obtained; and a desired compleat deliverance wrought from all those troubles and pressures which tried his Faith and Patience while a Pilgrim here; and likewise because then in a more special manner, after all his afflictive wanderings from Mountain to Hill, after all his sinful rambles and excursions, and after all his tedious travels, pursuits and runnings to and fro after Creature-enjoyments and comforts, which did often run faster from him than he could after them, so that he was forced to lie down in sorrow upon the score of his disappointment; I say, after all this, his Soul doth at death take its flight for the other World, and joyfully returns unto that God with whom it long'd to be, and in whom it shall take up a perfect, undisturbed, and everlasting Rest. There are but two things in the Text which need and call for Explication. *Return unto thy rest, O my Soul!*

The Question will be, What are we here to understand by *Rest*? To which I answer in these three things briefly.

First, Some do look upon it as importing a quiet state and condition, after all those tumblings & tossings which he had had, the hurries of his life caused by the uncertainty and variety of Providences, the many and great afflictions that had been ordered out to him, God had now brought him *ad lo-*

and take possession. The Waters are asswaged, the Ark is upon firm ground, now, my Soul, go forth, and offer such a Sacrifice as will be of a sweet savour.

Secondly, Others do by *Rest* understand a still and pacate frame; He had been before very uneasy, and thereupon unquiet in his Spirit. He had been under great and furious tempests, which had raised much filth and corruption that greatly royl'd him; while there were fightings without, there were fears within, and those fears did bid defiance to his Faith, & in many Encounters prevailed against it, so that his Soul was dejected and disquieted within him: Now he would have those storms to be laid, and his Soul to return unto that blessed tranquillity and calm which in former times it did enjoy through the comfortable shinnings of God upon it. But I shall pass by both these; therefore

Thirdly, Others do here by *Rest*, understand God himself; so that when the Psalmist saith, *Return unto thy Rest, O my Soul*: his meaning is, *Return unto thy God; redi ad illum, apud quem summam invenies tranquillitatem, nempe ad Deum*, return to him, namely, to God, with whom thou wilt enjoy thy self as thou wouldst, in whom thou wilt have the greatest peace, and sweetest repose. Thou hast been going to this, and to the other, scattering thy ways; now, my Soul, give them their last farewell, and go to thy God, for with him it will be better with thee than it is now.

As for that other phrase, *the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee*; it is variously rendred. He hath recompensed thee, he hath given thee a reward; He hath done thee good; viz. in delivering thee from thine Enemies, from thy dangers, and from thy distresses, and from all thy fears. He hath satisfied thee by granting thy desires, and accomplishing thy hopes; but I see no just reason why we should leave our own Translation, *the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee*. There is nothing else in the words that carrieth in it the least appearance of a difficulty. In them we may take notice of these two parts,

First, A gracious persons inviting or calling his Soul home; calling upon his Soul to leave its idle extravagancy, and to go back to the place from whence it came, to direct its steps or motions to that God with whom it should both be, and love to be. *Return unto thy Rest, O my Soul! Return unto thy God, O my Soul!*

Secondly, Here is the Argument he useth for the prevailing with his Soul, and persuading it to steer this holy and blessed course; for *the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee*; thy Experiences may very well be thy Encouragements. The Doctrines which I shall present you with from hence, are of the same number with the parts; unto both which I shall speak at this time

First Doctrine is this; *A gracious Soul should be glad to think of returning to its God, and often call upon it self to that purpose: Return unto thy Rest, O my Soul!*

The second Doctrine is this; *The Experiences that gracious Souls have had of God; or, his former gracious and bountiful dealings with them, should be a cogent and prevailing Argument for their returning unto him.* This was the

*the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.* We shall handle them in their order, and so begin with the former.

Doct. 1. *A gracious Soul should be glad to think of returning to its God, and call often upon it self to such a blessed purpose. Return unto thy Rest, O my Soul!* Now the very mentioning of a return to God, doth naturally and directly lead us to the consideration of a distance at which the Soul before was from God; for if there had not been a departure from God, there would not be any need of, nor occasion for a return to him, *Jer. 3. 12. Return, thou backsliding Israel, saith the Lord.* And again he calls, *verse 22. Return, ye backsliding Children, and I will heal your backslidings.* They had not walked with God, nor kept close to him, as they were by their duty and interest obliged to have done, but were gone from him: Though they had once come up to him, and went after him in a Wilderness, in a Land that was not sown, yet they drew back again; kindness would not hold them, nor Covenant, nor the Cords of a man, but back they did draw, yea and that not a little way, but as the Lord himself complained in *Jer. 2. 5. They had gone far from him, and walked after vanity, and were become vain:* But whether did they go, when they left God? you may be sure, they changed not for the better; they went to base Idols, to them that were not Gods, and that was a great way; they went far from God in going to Pagan Heathenish Idolatry, as those among us are gone far from God, who have renounced the Protestant Religion, and are gone over to the Tents of Antichrist, to Popish Idolatry. Yet for ever to be admired is the Divine mercy and goodness; those that had gone from God, yea that had gone so exceeding far from him without having any just cause given them for so doing, he was graciously pleased to call back again to himself, *Return, O backsliding Children!* so that a return doth speak a distance that is between God and man. Now this distance is to be found in a threefold state, and answerable to that threefold distance there is to be a threefold return; there is a distance from God at which man stands in a threefold state.

1. In his Unregenerate
  2. In his Imperfect
  3. In his Mortal
- } State.

1. Men, all men are at a distance from God, during their corrupt and unregenerate state; those that are in their sins, are, as the Apostle said of the unconverted *Ephesians, Eph. 2. 12. without God in the world;* let them have what they will, never such natural and acquired accomplishments, such friends and relations, such honour and power, such estates and revenues, they have not God; let them make never so great a figure in the world, they are without God in the world. You that are in your impure naturals, the Servants of sin, under the power and dominion of your lusts; you that have not been born again, nor quickened by the Divine Spirit, nor made partakers of Grace and Holiness, you are to this day far from God; you may indeed frequent the Assemblies of the Saints, and walk in an outward Fel-

engage to the external performance of commanded duties; you may sit at the Table of the Lord: Foolish Virgins had their Lamps, and walked with the Wife. *Simon Magnus* was baptized; *Judas* received the Sop; but you never yet came to God: All this amounts to no more than a drawing nigh with your lips, the shadow of an approach, a coming before him as his People, in pretence and shew, there is nothing of truth and reality, nothing of soundness and honesty in what you do, it is all complement and hypocrisie, *for your hearts are far from him*. I doubt not but you will easily grant, that those who are bitter and mortal Enemies one to another, are far one from another, though, as to their bodies they may be in the same room; now a state of sin is a state of enmity; so the Apostle *Paul* tells us, *Rom. 8. 7. The carnal mind is enmity against God*; enmity in the abstract, enmity in the height of it: The carnal mind votes against God, and the carnal heart hates him, and all that bears his Image and Supercription; it hates his Law, his Government, his Word, his Ways, his People, any thing that savours of God, any one that resembles him. As God doth perfectly hate the carnal mans wickedness; so doth the carnal man hate Gods holiness, yea all holiness, except it be an holy day of his own making. The unregenerate man cannot endure the splendor of the Sun, no, not so much as the twinkling of a Star: My meaning is, he cannot bear with the perfect holiness of God himself, no, not with the imperfect holiness of his People.

Secondly, There is a distance from God in our *imperfect state*, while we are in our nonage and minority. The gracious Soul is indeed said to be brought nigh; as you may see in *Ephes. 2. 13. Now in Christ Jesus ye Who were sometimes far off, are made nigh by the blood of Christ*: So that as ye have it in *verse 19. Ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens of the Saints, and of the household of God*: You are now some of the family with some of the house; all those that are sincere Converts, sound Believers, persuaded to be not almost, but altogether Christians, are brought into a *near relation* to God; they are his Children, and have a right to go up to his very Throne, and there call him Father, and they are also brought into a *near Communion*, *1 John 1. 3. That which we have seen and heard, declare we unto you, that ye might have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ*. And as God hath made it their duty so they do make it their delight to be drawing nigh to him in those Ways which he hath appointed them; hence they love praying and hearing, Sabbaths and Sacraments, means of grace, and actings of grace; and many sweet meeting they have with him, and abundance of benefit and advantage they find coming into their Souls by it, *Psal. 73. 28. It is good for me to draw near to God*, pleasant and profitable; good as it affords me peace, and good as it promotes my growth; good as it increaseth my grace, and as it adds to my comfort; it is every way, and upon all accounts, good to draw nigh to God; but yet, as near as the Saints themselves are to God, they are not so near to him as they would be, nor as they should be; and therefore they

things of the enamoured Spouse, *Cant. 1. 4. Draw me, we will run after thee.* And the Language of all holy Souls is the very same, for they are not satisfied with, though thankful for what they have, but are, and while here, will be making out after nearer approaches, & still nearer, not only the banquetting-house-entertainment, *Cant. 2. 4.* but chamber-fellowship, *Cant. 3. 4.* and after clearer sights, *Shew me thy glory*, said *Moses*; and after fuller enjoyments. *Stay me with flaggons, comfort me with apples*: Straw me with them, compass, load me with them; and as none of them are so full as they would be, so, none of them so fixed as they would be; they cannot dwell upon God as they would do, but are guilty of wandrings from him, both out of duty, and in it too; their minds and affections are running away from God, so that they have them to seek while they should be wholly taken up with him; woful flutterings and roving are the matter of their frequent and sorrowful complaint.

Thirdly, There will be a distance during the time of this their mortal state while they do inhabit the earthly house of this Tabernacle; so long as the Christian is upon Earth, he is not where he would be, unless it be for work-sake, and for duties-sake; this is not his own home, but the house of his Pilgrimage; this is not his Country, but a strange Land; this is not his rest, for it is polluted, and he is uneasy; and when he can make his escape, and be upon the wing, and get to Heaven, by raised meditations, flaming affections, and a Gospel-adorning conversation, still he is not there so as he would be, not in such a manner, nor to such a degree. He is not so often there, nor so much there, nor so long there as he would be; *Rara bona, brevis mora.* He can get up thither too seldom, and he can abide there too little. He is not wholly and altogether there as he would be: when he hath taken a great deal of pains to winde his Soul up, there are heavy weights that press it down, and so there are miserable, vexatious declensions and descensions; through weakness the holy Soul cannot mount up to Heaven so strongly, and through wantonness it cannot abide there so constantly as it would; and besides this, the present state is a *state of absence*, which the gracious heart doth not like nor approve; it is grievous and irksome to it, as the wilderness-condition was to *Israel*, though they had Manna sent them from Heaven, and Water fetched for them out of a Rock, and that following them in a never-failing stream, yet it was but a wilderness, not the Land flowing with Milk and Honey, which they had in the Promise, and in their Hope, *1 Cor. 5. 6. While we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord*; we do not enjoy his glorious presence, nor lie in his bosom; we do walk by faith, and not by sight; we rejoyce in hope, and not in fruition; the sights which we have of him, are but as in a glass, darkly, and not face to face: Our enjoyment of him is mediate, we have his tokens, and not those endearing embraces that we would: Yea and while we are absent we are burdened with this load of corruptible flesh, in which we cannot be compleatly happy, and with a load of sin, the body of death which stinks in our nostrils, and with a load of



accounts there follow an uneasiness and restlessness of spirit; *verse 2. We grieve earnestly, desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from Heaven,* we have a Robe of Immortality and Glory put on over this Garment of the body. Thus I have shewn you that there is a distance from the Lord, and that in all men, even the best and most holy, those who have attained to the largest measures, and highest degrees of grace while they are Pilgrims and Strangers here. Now according to this threefold distance from God there is to be a threefold return to him, if ever we would come to the enjoyment of a perfect happiness and rest; which I shall give up thus to you.

First, There is a return to God at the time, and in the work of *Conversion*, when there is a sanctifying change wrought in a person; when he is of a Sinner made a Saint; and of an Enemy a Friend of God. This is evident from that speech of our Saviour to Saul, *Acts 26. 17, 18. I do now send thee to the Gentiles, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, from ignorance to knowledge, from Idolatry and wickedness, to the owning, acknowledging, worshipping and serving of God.* Converting Grace is the begetting of a Soul to God, the bringing of the Prodigal Son to his Father, the reducing of the lost and wandering Sheep home to its fold; and this is the first return; this is the first step; until this be taken, the Soul is not only far from God, but, which is both its sin and misery, it is going further and further from him: For every act of sin is a step from God, and a continued course of sin, is a constant departure from him: As men sin against God more and more; so they do revolt from God more and more; while they add to sin, they add to backslide. But in Conversion there is a returning to him; this sets face and heart God-ward; and now the feet are guided into the way of peace. Thrice happy you that have thus returned; this is the beginning of your life. As the Father said with joy concerning his returning Prodigal; *This my Son was dead, but he is alive;* and this is the beginning of your blessedness. Therefore Peter Preaching to the Jews, told them, *Acts 3. 26. That unto thee first God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless them, in turning away every one of them from their iniquities.* Yea, my Friends, whatsoever cheats are put upon you by the Father of Lies, and your own self-deceiving hearts, you will never be a blessed people, till you are turned from your iniquities, till then you are under guilt and wrath, and a curse; but a turning from iniquity, is a returning unto God: The turning you from sin, is the breaking down of that middle wall of partition which did before stand between God and you: Let me therefore speak to you, O sinners! in the same words that Paul used, *Acts 3. 19. Repent ye and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.*

Secondly, There is a further return unto God in the actings, exercise and increases of grace; for though there be a turning to God in the first Conversion, yet we must not stop there; returning to him ought to be the

nearer to motion, and so nearer and nearer every day. Now, as every Act of sin, is a step from God; so every act of grace is a step to God. Faith lifts the Soul above the things that are seen, and mounts it up as upon the wings of an Eagle. Love carrieth the Soul up as in a fiery Chariot, a pure and holy flame, so that it dwelleth in God, and God in it. Ardent and importunate desires are the feet upon which the Soul runs out to God, and followeth hard after him; and the more the Soul tramples upon the things that are below, and by acts of self-denial goeth out of it self, the more doth it find it self in God: And so it is with reference to the happy additions which it makes to the grace it hath; the more it grows in grace, the more doth it grow up unto God. All the improvements it makes in grace, are blessed progresss in its way to God; that is indeed going from strength to strength, till it appear before God in Zion, *Psalm 84*. Oh who is there that considers this, that would be retrograde in his motions, and languishing and decaying in spirituals! who would be content to stand at a day? who would not be possessed with, and acted by a spirit of holy covetousness, always receiving out of the richness of Christ, and yet always begging? and while he draws up one Bucket-full, letting down another for more. Remember it, O Christians! the more you are as by the Spirit of the Lord changed from grace to grace, the more considerable advances you make from lower to higher degrees of holiness; the more will you be transformed in the spirit of your mind, and changed from glory to glory, the more will you have in you of a Divine Nature, and the more of the Divine Image upon you. In a word, by this means you will come to have a greater conformity and likeness unto God, and so a sweeter communion and intimacy with him. So then this is a further return unto God; this is a getting nearer and nearer to him; and truly this should be the work of every day. This is that which we should have in our designs and aims in all the holy duties that we perform, and in all the precious Ordinances upon which we do attend, that by every one of them we may have a lift given us, and be brought more over, and more close to God than we as yet are.

Thirdly, There is a return to God at death: So the Royal Preacher tells us, *Ecclesiastes 12, 7*. *The dust shall return to the Earth as it was; of that it was made, and into that it shall be resolved.* When once the Soul leaves it, the body drops into the grave, and there first it putrifies, and at length it crumbles; *but the Spirit shall return unto God that gave it.* All the Souls of Men and Women, one and other, both the good and the bad, shall at death be upon their return; whether with their will, or against it, this must be done: They did at first come from God, when they were formed; he created them, he infused them; he united them to the body, and when that Union shall be dissolved, when Death shall untie the knot, and snap the band asunder, then doth the Spirit return to God. The polluted and degenerate Souls of wicked men shall in all their guilt, filth and deformity, return to God, that they may from him receive their final and irreversible Sentence.

the hands of evil Angels, the Devils, to be by them as a company of cruel  
malefactor, carried into a dungeon of darkness, the bottomless Pit, where  
there is unquenchable fire to torment them, but not the least beam of light  
to comfort and refresh them; and so they shall be punished with an everlast-  
ing destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power.  
2 Thes. 1. And the Souls of Saints which have been washed from their  
filthiness in the blood of the Lamb, and had their nature changed, their  
principles made holy, and their beauty perfect through Christs comeliness  
put upon them, shall also then return unto God as their reconciled Friend  
and everlasting Father, to be by him received graciously, heartily welcom'd  
and put into those glorious Mansions which have been designed and prepa-  
red for them; in which they shall enjoy God, and in him a perfect happi-  
ness without danger or fear of losing either him or it. Our blessed Lord Je-  
sus made way for this return of the Soul to God by his most precious blood  
which is pacifying to God, and purifying to man, by it he made peace, such  
a peace as cannot be broken, and so cleared the passage, that all the Devils in  
Hell cannot shut it up again. The blessed and Divine Spirit, whom our Sa-  
viour promised to send, doth make it his work and business to bring Souls  
back to God by his quickening, renewing and sanctifying grace, and to  
carry them on further and further by fresh influences, assistances and supplies.  
And then when they come to be duly qualified, ready, and meet to be made  
partakers of the Inheritance of the Saints in light, so that they may be pre-  
sented before the presence of the Divine glory with exceeding joy, the holy  
Angels who are now appointed to be ministering Spirits unto them who are  
the Heirs of Salvation, are sent forth by their tender and ever-loving Father  
as his Messengers to fetch them home, and as a powerful Guard to convey  
them safe through the Regions of the Air, and Legions of Devils, into the  
seat of the blessed, those celestial and sure resting places which their Lord  
and Head purchased, and hath taken possession of in their names, and now  
keeps for them. And this is that return which I shall discourse to you about  
as that which is most proper, because most pertinent and suitable to the pre-  
sent occasion. This is that return which the holy Soul should have much up-  
on its thoughts, and which it ought to desire with longings; and when the  
time is come, call upon it self to make with all cheartful readines; and we  
have a very good reason for it in the Text before us, because it is a return-  
ing to our rest. There is a sweet and desirable rest which Death brings along  
with it to the People of God: A rest to the body, that it lays to sleep in the  
chamber of the grave, in the bed of dust, *Isa. 57. 1, 2. The righteous perish, and  
merciful men are taken away;* if you ask from what, he tells you, *it is from  
the evil to come;* if again you ask, what becomes of them? he tells you  
*they go, or enter into peace, and shall rest in their beds,* and that out of the reach  
of them who would discompose them, as Job spake when he was discontented  
because Death was so slow-paced, and came no sooner for him, for if it had  
saith he Job 3. 17. then I should have been where the wicked cease from trou-  
bling



hear not the voice of the oppressor; But that which is far more and better than that, when Death knocks at the door of a godly man, it brings along with it a rest unto his Soul: Or that I may speak more properly, it brings the Soul to its rest; to the best rest it can have or desire; viz. a rest in its God, a rest in the Centre, a rest in the arms and bosom of him who is the supreme object of its love, and pleasant for delights. That rest can want nothing to compleat it, which is a rest in Heaven, a rest in God. But in order to the commending to you this return unto God by Death, we will briefly shew these two things. 1. What those things are, from which the Soul doth after Death rest? 2. What are the properties of that rest, which the holy Soul shall then be put into the possession of? First then, What are those things which the holy Soul doth after Death rest from? Unto this I shall answer in these four things.

First, There will be a rest from all Conflicts, for then it enters into peace, and is encompassed about with it. The life of a Christian here is throughout a combating life; there is not any that flees to Christ as a Saviour, but must, if he would find him so, submit to him as a Lord, and list himself under him as a Captain. Therefore we are expressly commanded to put on the whole Armour of God, and to fight the good fight of Faith, and to endure hardship as the good Souldiers of Jesus Christ. You must not think to live here wholly at ease and in quiet. Christianity is a warfare. No sooner are you reconciled, and made the Friends of God, but others will be enraged, and become desperate, yea implacable Enemies unto you. Great Enemies there are, potent, cruel, and a great many of them. *Intestine* Enemies, those of our own house, yea nearer yet, those of our own hearts; and because they are so very near, therefore they are exceeding dangerous. A Legion of lusts which war against the Soul; who indeed can tell the number of them? There is flesh which lusteth against the spirit; sin against grace; fears, and doubts, and jealousies of God against Faith; sensual and self-love against the love of God; and there are foreign Enemies too. Satan and the World; the *World* one while undermines the Soul by its flattering promises, and another while batters it with its terrible menaces. Now it fawns with *Delilah*, anon it frowns like a fury; and then the *Devil*, who will never be quiet, at one time he comes forth against the Soul in a disguise, like to an Angel of Light, that he may so deceive and surprize it; at another time he will appear in his own shape, as ugly and deformed as it is; for Devils do not know how to blush; I say, he comes as a Prince of darkness, to carry it captive, and fright it into his Net; sometimes the Saints find him hissing as a Serpent, and nibbling at their heels, at other times roaring like a Lion, and coming upon them with open mouth, as if he would swallow them at once; so that what with the one and the other, the sin that dwelleth within, and the Enemies that beset and lay close siege without, the poor Christian is oftentimes weary of his life; but when Death comes, it puts an end to all this, it takes the Christian and carries him out of the field, and

of Salvation, having come off with honour, and obtain'd the Victory, yea, been more than a Conquerour, shall maintain an everlasting Triumph, with their Robes of Glory, and Palms in their hands. When once Death lays them asleep in their graves, the last stroke is struck as to them; they shall not learn nor prosecute this holy War any more.

Secondly, There will be a rest from trouble and sorrow; As there will be no fightings, so no mournings; as no dangers, so no sighs. This World is a place of trouble, it is full of it. Man is born to trouble, and as it meets him at his birth, so it will accompany him to his grave. When our first Father *Adam* had once transgressed the Law of his Creation, there was immediately introduc'd a dismal and astonishing change; the face of the Earth was covered with Briars and Thorns; and who is there among all the Children of men that hath not his fingers pricked with them? who is there that can pass thorough this Wilderness without multiplied wounds? Indeed the same measure is not meted out to all; every one cannot say, he is plagued all the day long, and chastened every morning, yet there is not one but hath so much as he thinks enough; yea and, it may be, more too. We are sometimes troubled by those that live about us, *Psal. 57. 4. My Soul is among Lions, and I lie even among them that are set on fire, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongues are sharp swords*: And we are troubled oftentimes by those that live with us, *Micah 7. 6. The Son dishonoureth his Father, and the Daughter her Mother; the Daughter-in-law riseth up against her Mother-in-law; a man's Enemies are those of his own house*. How usual a thing is it to see and hear of persons greatly afflicted by their friends and acquaintance; *Cesar* by *Brutus*, *David* by *Achitophel*, *Christ* by a *Judas*, one of his own Disciples; nay, by our near Relations, those that came out of our bowels, rise up against us, and work our ruine? How many are there that have Vipers and vexations in their bosoms? one a treacherous *Delilah*, another a flouting *Michal*; their very Beds are strawed with Thorns, so that they lie uneasie, and in the morning rise up with aking heads and hearts. Nay, to come nearer yet, how many in the World are their own tormentors, and carry, as if they made it their business and sport to trouble themselves, by their solicitous and carking cares, and by their melancholick apprehensions and thoughts, upon which they sit brooding, and hatch an hundred Monsters to their own affrightment, and by their unbelieving fears, whereby they affront the Veracity of God, and question such a Covenant as is everlasting, ordered in all things and sure, and such Promises as are firm like Mountains of Brasse, *Yea* and *Amen*; and also by their vain janglings, and peevish quarrels which they raise without any sense or reason? In short, some have a great deal of trouble in the flesh, and others have a great deal more in the spirit, and not a few in both, and so are in a place where two Seas meet, so that all the waves and billows go over them. But when a Saint dieth, all is over, *the Winter is past, the Rain is over and gone, and he is at rest from*

not one thing left to trouble him: Everlasting joy shall be upon his head, but sorrow and sighing shall flee away; there shall not then be one single tear left upon his cheek, no nor the least thing that should be the cause of it. As the wicked mans jollity doth at death end in an extremity of anguish, so at death the godly mans troubles shall end in a fulness of joy.

Thirdly, There will also be a rest from all weariness and toilsom labour. Man had work to do in his state of Innocency, being then put into the Garden to dress it, and to keep it, *Gen. 2. 15.* But tedious labour came in upon the fall, was the fruit and punishment of sin; it was not till after that he was to eat his bread in the sweat of his brows; but that is the burden bound upon us in our lapsed and degenerate condition, which we cannot shake off. We must all take a great deal of pains, not only she that grindeth at the Mill, but he too that sitteth upon the Throne. Earth is not to be got by idleness; *Solomon* tells us, *The sluggard shall be clothed with raggs*; and surely then, Heaven is not to be got without pains: It will not drop into mens laps while they sleep; it was wont to suffer violence, and sure its price is not so much fallen, as that now it should come for nothing. It is true, there are gracious influences and assistances from God, but there is required industry and utmost diligence of man. It is God that worketh both to will and to do of his own good pleasure; but notwithstanding that; nay, because of that man is obliged and concerned to work out his Salvation with fear and trembling. Many there are that pretend to Religion; and usurp the name of Christians, which belongs no more to them, than that of Man to a Monkey, and bless themselves in a vain confidence of coming to Heaven with less ado, but as great safety as the best and most precise, and so spend their days in mirth and jollity, in sloth and sensuality, but they shall find themselves mistaken, and to have run away with a Lye in their right hand. Those that are truly gracious, can and will from their own daily experience, tell you, that it is no easie matter to be a Christian, and to walk with God in an holy close Communion, and to live in the World according to the Law of the New Creature. It doth cost such an one a great deal more than I can tell you to raise his heart, and get it up to a spiritual holy frame fit to attend upon God in an Ordinance, or to approach him in a duty, and it stands him in full out as much to preserve it in such a frame when it is once in it, and to prevent its going down again after it hath been wound up. Heart-raising, and heart-fixing, are two works of no mean difficulty, too hard indeed for a Child of God, when at his best, if taken alone. *We labour*, saith the Apostle, *that whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him*, *2 Cor. 5. 9.* As they were ambitious of it, so they were industrious. But, *Rev. 14. 13.* *A voice from Heaven said, Blessed are the dead that die in the Lord; yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours, and their works do follow them*: There is no idleness in Heaven, but constant action, but such action as is rest; no labouring to sweat or weariness, but reaping the fruit of

of his name, and admiring of his mercy, contemplating his glory, and living in his joy.

Lastly, and which is yet more, There will be a rest from all desire. It is a very good observation which that excellent Divine Mr. *Joseph Symonds*, who is now with God, made upon that expression of holy *Asaph* *Psal.* 73. 25. *Whom have I in Heaven but thee? and there is none upon Earth that I desire beside thee.* Heaven is the place of having, but Earth is the place of desiring. And indeed so it is; while the poor Saint is upon Earth, his wants are so many, and his necessities so great, that he is abundantly more in his desires than he is in his attainments, *I have not already attained*, saith *Paul*, neither am I already perfect; O that I might know him! O that I might apprehend that for which I am apprehended of Christ! O that by any means I might attain to the resurrection of the dead! I forget that which is behind, and reach forth to that which is before, and press on toward the mark; and there is the same spirit of faith, and love, and desire, and longing in all those that have past through the new birth. Attainments in many of them are little and low, but in all of them desires are high. And though these desires are exceeding good, yet they are very painful, as *arp* hunger is to an almost starved creature. How uneasie is a longing Woman! it makes her sick at the very heart, not seldom causeth a faintness and swoonings, and puts her into a great discomposure throughout. So do the desires of a longing Saint; too too often he over-looks, and pays not unto God due acknowledgments for, nor doth he himself taste the sweetness, and take the comfort of what he hath, because he cannot as yet get what he wants. Oh how much doth such an one hasten after a deliverance from sin! How eagerly doth he thirst for increases of grace! How doth he aspire to an holy fixation of mind, free from those avocations and diversions which afflict him! And as the hunted, parched Hart panteth after the Water-brooks, so doth his Soul pant after the Living God, and an intimate unbroken Communion with him; and it is even sick with love and longings, because it finds not what it thus seeks. It doth hardly enjoy it self, because it hath not those enjoyments that it would. But when once Death hath done its work upon him, there is a rest from these things too; not because the Souls love is in the least cool'd and abated, for then it is perfected, and raised up to the purest, hottest and highest flame, in which it shall everlastingly continue; but because it hath plenary fruition of that which it loves, of all which it loves. While the gracious Soul is here in the body, it hath its fallings out, its earnest reaches, and lofty flights: Oh that it were so and so! Thus poor *Job*, as you have it in *Job* 29. v. 2, &c. O that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when his Candle shined upon my head, and when by his light I walked thorough darkness, when the secret of God was upon my Tabernacle, when the Almighty was yet with me! So, O that it were with me as sometimes I have found it! O that it were with me as it is with such an one, and such an

God more, and love him more, and live him more ! But when the Soul comes to Heaven, it takes the place appointed and prepared for it, and there it sits down at ease, because it is where it would be, and as it would be. There is no desire, because a compleat satisfaction, *Psal. 17. ult. As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness, I shall be satisfied when I awake with thy likeness* : There desires are turned into, and swallowed up of delights. There is indeed in glorified Souls a natural desire of the resurrection of their bodies, and a reunion to them, but that desire is no impairing of their happiness, not in the least afflictive, because moderate and rightly tempered, and sweetened with a full assurance that it shall be done at the time appointed by the Father : And in the mean while they are abundantly pleas'd, having a fulness of joy in the vision and fruition of God, Father, Son and Spirit, who is to them infinitely better than the body can be. Come we now to the next thing propounded ; *viz.* the properties of that rest into which the holy Soul doth enter after death, or what kind of rest it is ; and that I shall endeavour to shew you in these three particulars.

First, It is a compleat rest, every way perfect, there is not any thing wanting thereunto. There is indeed a sweet and blessed rest which those have here in this life, who come to Christ, and make a believing closure upon the terms propounded in the Gospel ; though they have not the rest of the World, yet they have a rest in the World, and that in the midst of confusions and confusions, when they are tumbled and toss'd up and down, they have a rest out of their Enemies reach : This our dear Lord and Saviour hath promised, and he cannot but be as good as his word, *Mat. 11. 28. Come unto me all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest* ; not only a right to it, but the possession of it ; that which they could not meet with before, neither in themselves, nor in the creature, they meet with in him ; as the *Dove* that could find no place for the sole of its foot when it was abroad, as the *Raven* could, that would light and feed upon Carrion, the dead carcases floating upon the surface of the waters, yet it found rest in the Ark upon its return to it. Those that before were through the stings of Conscience, and the apprehensions of Divine wrath, and impending Judgments as persons upon a Rack, are through the sprinklings of the blood of the Covenant upon them, and the sealings and witnessings of the Spirit within them as in a Bed of Down or Roses : Those wounds that formerly smarted, are graciously healed, and their Agonies are over, unless they cause new ones by their foolishness ; but for all this, here *aliquid deest*, something is wanting, as well as something amiss. *Paul* in *1 Thes. 3. 10.* speaks of something that was *lacking in their Faith*, and truly the same may be affirmed of the best improved, and most grown Saints on this side of Heaven, that there is something lacking in their Faith, yea and in their Love, and in their Humility, and Meekness, and Patience, and in all the graces that have been by the blessed Spirit of God wrought in them. And we may be sure of this, that as long as there is something lacking in the grace, there will be something lacking

not be arrived at a perfect state. But after death all these wants will be supplied, and all these defects made up, there will be no vacancy in the Soul, nothing lacking, then that which is perfect will be come, and so that which is imperfect shall be done away, and hereupon that rest which the Soul shall have when it comes to Heaven, will be greater and fuller than that which it had when it first came to Christ, or all the while that it lived a sojourner in the World, there will be perfect holiness, and by consequence there will be a perfect happiness. God will not in any thing be behind hand with his people, or wanting to them, there they are continually before the Throne of God, always in his presence, and *David* tells us, *Psal. 16. 11. That in his presence there is fulness of joy*, and a fulness of joy doth necessarily imply and carry along with it, a fulness of rest and that which followeth hereupon.

Secondly, It is an undisturbed rest. Here our peace is oftentimes broken, and our rest is gone. It is said of *Abasuerus*, that he could not sleep, his sleep fled away from him, he did all that in him lay to compose himself, he would gladly have slept, but he could not. So it is Spiritually with the Saints themselves, their rest fleeth from them. Sometimes they break their own rest, *Psal. 38. There is no rest in my bones because of my sin*, and as there was none in his bones, so none in his flesh, and none in his Spirit; and sometimes God breaks their rest, one while he gives them rest round about, at another time he makes them fear round about, *Job 7. 13, 14. When I say my Bed shall comfort me, my Couch shall ease my complaint, then thou scarest me with Dreams and terrifiest me with Visions*. Oh the dismal thoughts that some good people have in the night, they lie down with holy and gracious thoughts, with believing thoughts, with God-admiring thoughts but in their sleep they have Vain, Absurd, Defiling and Disturbing thoughts; so that they wake in an affright, and as the Psalmist tells us, *sometimes sorrow endures for a night, and joy comes in the morning*. So experience tells us that at other times joy endures for a day, and sorrow comes in the Evening. The bright and comfortable sun sets in a dark Cloud. *David* reckoned without his host when in *Psal. 30.* he thought his Mountain stood strong, his State of Peace and Prosperity was firm and unalterable, so that he should never be moved, that he should never more feel what broken bones meant, nor be any more hunted by his enemy as a Partridge upon the Mountains, nor be again smitten and almost consumed by the blow of the Divine hand, nor have his moisture turned into the drought of Summer. But he was quickly convinced of his mistake, *God hid his face and he was troubled*. So troubled as that he was at his wits end, almost beside himself, both Counsel and Courage failed him. But now when once the Soul comes to Heaven, there shall be nothing of a disturbance, no such inroads made upon its peace, but a perpetual Serenity and Calm, a clear Sun-shine without any Eclipse or Clouds, or Overcastings. No hiding of the face of God, no damp upon the Soul. No frown without, no fear within



an holy reception, no anger in God to obstruct and stop his gracious communication. God will be continually giving out of himself and the Soul shall be continually taking in. The glorified Soul shall be always full up to the brim, and as God shall please according to the exceeding riches of his grace and kindness to dart forth new beams and rays of his glory, so he will strengthen the eye that it shall behold them with inconceivable delight and pleasure, as he shall please to open his hand of Love, so he will widen the Vessel, and enlarge its capacity.

Thirdly, It will be an everlasting rest, as it knows no disturbance, so no end. The Soul for certain shall not sleep, as some have fondly and foolishly imagined, the body indeed doth, that enjoys a sweet sleep in its bed of dust, where it lies in Jesus, for death hath not broken the Union between it and Christ, *1 Thes. 4. 14. Them which sleep in Jesus shall God bring with him.* But the Soul sleeps not, it is not suitable to the nature of it, it meets with enough to keep it awake. Yea, it will be so far from sleeping, as that it shall not so much as wink, for it shall not know any such thing as lassitude or weariness. It shall be continually acting, and that with Strength and Vigour, to the utmost of its power, and yet not be tyred by those actions. The bow shall be always bent, yet not hereupon grow a Slug, but abide in strength. But though the Soul shall never sleep, yet it shall always rest, when it is once entered into it, it shall abide and never come out more; there are, as you have heard from the Word, pleasures for evermore, and therefore there shall be rest for evermore. O Eternity, Eternity, its length is not to be measured, but its weight and importance to be seriously consider'd, that is the sweet ingredient in the joys above, and that the Gall which is put into the Cup of trembling and astonishment below; the damned in Hell shall be in everlasting misery, their worm dieth not, and the glorified Souls shall have an everlasting felicity. Let us apply to this those sweet expressions which we find in *Rev. 7. 15, 16, 17. They are before the Throne of God, as Heavens Courtiers and Favourites whom the King of Kings loves to look upon. They serve him day and night in his Temple. They shall be altogether taken up with God, their whole business and employment shall be about God. And he that sits upon the throne shall dwell among them.* And there cannot be better Company, none so good. His presence is enough alone, *they shall hunger no more, neither thirst any more.* It is impossible they should be hungry who are at such a feast, or thirst, who have not only their Cups running over, but are continually refreshing and bathing themselves in a River of pleasure and of life, clear as Christal, which proceeds out of the Throne of God and of the Lamb, *neither shall the Sun-light on them nor any heat,* there shall be beams to refresh them, but none to scorch them. Nothing that shall render them faint or uneasy. *For the Lamb which is in the midst of the Throne shall feed them.* He loves to do it, and he will be sure to give them the best, and with a large liberal hand, *and shall lead them to fountains of living water, all fresh and pure, and at the first hand, and God*

shall

removed all sorrow from their hearts, if there be not a tear, then not a sigh, nor a sad thought, and further you may be also sure, that since God doth with his own gracious hand, wipe away all their tears, none of them shall return, nor shall any new ones succeed and come in the room of the former. A tear shall not be found in the eye, nor upon the cheek, throughout all eternity. Thus have I done what I promised as to the first Doctrine, the use whereof I shall defer until I have spoken to the second Doctrine, and then shall make some short application of them both together. Now that Doctrine as was said before, will arise from the reason of *Dauid's* calling upon his Soul to return unto its rest, or if you please, from the argument and motive he useth for the perswading it so to do, taken from Gods former providences and gracious dispensations towards him. *For the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee.* Which is such an argument as doth become every Saint, every one of his Children; for upon them all he hath shewn and magnified his mercy. The Doctrine shall be this.

-Doct. 2. *Gods dealing bountifully with a Soul should be a powerful and cogent argument with it, for its return to him.* It doth carry a great deal of weight and reason in it, and it should come with a proportionable strength upon the Soul. It should be effectual. It should endear him to us, and highly commend him, and accordingly draw us to him, and inflame our desires and longings after an immediate communion more and more. If men will but give themselves leave to consider and weigh all things in a just ballance they will find and be constrained to acknowledge that there is no solid nor sufficient reason, nay not so much as the shadow of a reason in all Gods carriages to his people, why any one should go away from him. Therefore when upon the subducing of many of his common hearers, our Saviour propounded to his Disciples this Question, *Will ye also go away?* Peter for the name of the rest made this reply, *Lord, to whom shall we go?* We are well as we are, find such Love and Sweetness, and good entertainment with thee, that we do not know in all the world where we can mend our selves where we shall be better, nay where we may be so well; for *wish thee also are the words of eternal life.* And as there is no reason why any should go away from him, so in case any have been so foolish, and imprudent, and enemies to themselves, as to go away, there is no reason at all why they should stay away. Indeed if such deserters do return, it must be with shame and blushing: And that they may thank their former folly for, they had ten thousand times better come to shame than not come to God. But as was said there is no reason for their staying away altogether, *Jer. 2. 31. O Generation, see the word of the Lord, have I been a wilderness unto Israel, or a Land of darkness? wherefore say my people, We are Lords, we will come no more unto thee?* How now *Israel*, what is the meaning of this language? why have ye taken up such an hasty resolution? What is it that doth displease you? Wherein have I offended you? charge me if you can; what have I been or what have I done, what cause I have given you? What, will you con



ter ? In this case sinners must be speechless, or they will not be able to say any thing to purpose : Whereas on the other side, there is a great deal of reason why those that have gone from him should return to him. As soon as ever the Prodigal came to himself he thought it his best and wisest course to go to his Father. And there is also highest reason why those that live here in his love and fear, should desire to go from hence that they may live with him in his Kingdom and Glory. In the remainder of this discourse I shall speak only concerning the Souls return to God at death, and its willing and chearful readiness so to do. Christians, let me suppose you standing upon the Worlds higher ground, having the Sun of prosperity shining upon your Tabernacle, with waters of a full Cup wrung out unto you. Let your conditions here be never so full and pleasant, your life never so sweet, not made up of nights of trouble and months of vanity, but all good and halcyon; let your enjoyments be never so abounding, and your Communion with God never so close and intimate ; though your peace be as a River, and your righteousness in the delightful fruits thereof as the Waves of the Sea, yet this should not glue and fasten you to the World ; in the midst of all this your heart should be weaned, and willing to be gone, as knowing this is not your rest. Peter is looked upon as forgetting himself when upon the *transfiguration of Christ*, he said, *Lord it is good to be here, if thou wilt let us make here three Tabernacles, &c.* Where saith one, there are *plura absurda quam verba*, more absurdities than there are words. Paul that had been in the third Heaven was not for building but for the pulling down and dissolving of the Tabernacle. Nay the comfortable enjoyments which you have now, and Gods dealing bountifully with you at present both in temporals and Spiritualls, should make you willing and desirous to be gone, that you may know what the best will be, whensoever God is pleased to call for you, and by that grim Messenger Death, saith, *come up hither*, you should with gladness, and rejoycing say, Go my Soul, make no tarrying, shew no lothness, but with a smile and holy transport take thy last farewell of all these Earthly Friends and Enjoyments, of all these sublunary drossie delights, and welcom the Messenger that is sent for thee; though he should handle thy body roughly, yet let patience have its perfect work, and take it kindly, because thou shalt return to thy rest, and quickly be with that God from whom thou didst first come, whose face thou shalt behold in righteousness. Now that gracious and bountiful dealing which you have found at his hand all the time that you have spent in the world, notwithstanding your ill deservings and unanswerable walkings may very well contribute greatly to this willingness, and be a mighty encouragement; as they do strongly oblige you to *duty here*, so they should do more than reconcile you to a departure hence. That, I hope, will appear evidently to you upon a threefold account.

First, This bountiful dealing of God with you is a plain and evident demonstration of that fulness, which is in him; by the liberality of his hand, you may judge something of the greatness of his stock ; Who is a God like

what a blessed exchange do you make when you come to die! You leave a company of broken Cisterns, that are little, and leaking, can hold no water, but frequently fail your expectations, and leave you at that loss they find you in, and then you go to a living Fountain, that is ever full and overflowing: You go out of an earthly Clay Cottage, which is crazy and tottering, and the keeping of it in repair puts you to a great deal of trouble and charge, and when you have done your utmost, it must tumble, and then you take possession of an house not made with hands, eternal in the Heavens, whose builder and maker is God, and which was by him made for the place of his everlasting residence, the habitation of his holiness and glory; so that by all you part with here, you will be no losers, but change unspeakably to your advantage. Are there any of you that have got good hope through grace, that have had your Faith of Adherence crowned with that of Assurance? one would rationally conclude you as willing to go to Heaven as *Israel* was to see *Egypt* upon their backs, which had been to them an house of bondage and great servitude, or to make haste through an howling and inhospitable Wilderness, that they might come to a *Canaan*, a Land of desire, flowing with Milk and Honey. I beseech you, Christians, seriously to reflect upon things that are past, and consider what doth now come from God, what you have received since you did accept and embrace an offered *Jesus*, and what you are still receiving. How many common mercies, than the least of which you are less; and how many special mercies upon which you may read *Love*: you are not able to number them, being more than the hairs upon your heads. How many messages of peace have been brought to you by his Ministers and Spirit? How many comfortable Answers hath he given? so that you have been constrained to say, He hath not turned away your prayer; nor his mercy from you! How many rich tokens hath he blest you with, every one of greater value than an Orient Pearl, or glistering Diamond? How many marks of Covenant-favour hath he set upon you! In short, how often and how greatly hath he made your Souls to rejoyce, and your Hearts to leap within you! and then how well may you argue thus with your selves, If there be so much coming from God, what is there in God? If there be such conveyances made by the Pipes of Ordinances and Duties, what is there in him, in whom *are all my Springs*? If messages be so delicious, what are the closest embraces? If there be such beams at a distance, such comfortable beams and vital influences communicated in this state of absence, what light and life, what beauty and glory is there in the Eternal Sun!

Secondly, From this bountiful dealing of God with you, you may argue to his liberality, and the singular pleasure which he takes in giving forth of that his fulness to his People, which is infinitely beyond the delight of the most affectionate Mother in drawing her full and pained Breast to her sucking and smiling Infant. Death, it is true, will carry you from all your enjoyments in this World, it will strip you to your skins, and not so much

you do now taste the greatest sweetness, and from which you fetch your greatest comfort: You must shake hands with faithful Friends, dearest Relations, and Possessions; your places and preferments, your worldly honours and preeminences will know you no more. *If a man die, saith Job, shall he live again?* Yes, he shall, but not in the same place, not in the same state, not to the same ends and purposes that he did before. But what of all that? if you be such as you ought to be, and mind that for which you were sent hither, you shall at death go directly to him who is able to do for you far more abundantly than all these things could do, and to supply all your needs according to his riches in glory; and since he is able, you may by the sufficient warrant both of his Promise, and your own Experiences, say, I am sure also that he will do it. That God who hath been so good, so exceeding good to you here, you have no reason to question but he will be as good to you there. You have seen how mindful he is of his Covenant, and faithful to his Promises, & how much his heart is set upon your good, & his name is, *I am*; though the Heavens wax old like a garment, and shall be chang'd as a Vesture, yet he is always the same, without any variableness or shadow of turning, as great as ever, as full as ever, yea and as good as ever. It is not strange that good old *Jacob*, and all his family were forward to go into *Egypt*, when *Joseph*, who had already been so kind to them, sent this encouraging invitation, *Come to me, for I will give you the good of the Land of Egypt, and you shall eat the fat of the Land; regard not your stuff, for the good of all the Land of Egypt is before you.* Oh! saith the Text, *when they had told him all the words of Joseph, and when he saw the Waggon which Joseph had sent to carry him, his spirit revived; and he said, It is enough, Joseph is yet alive, I will go and see him.* Gen. 45. 27, 28. How much more may you be of the same mind? how much more readily may you set up your Sail for the other World, when God saith, *Come, my Son, my Daughter, come away, come to me, regard not your stuff, all the good of Heaven is before you?* And when you see the Messenger that must carry you hence, you may take heart, this may be, as they are wont to say, a lightning before death; my God is still alive, and my Saviour still alive, and he lives for evermore, I will go and see him, and live with him; I can tell what he is, I am sure he hath been a loving God to me, and that he delighteth in mercy. I have many and many a time tasted that he is gracious, and therefore I will not fear him now: Since mercy and goodness have followed me all the days of my life, I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever: What though I am going to another world, yet I shall be with the same God; and blessed are they that dwell in his house, for they are still praising. Heaven, whither I am to go, is filled with glory and admiration, and rings with *Allelujabs*. And then, which follows hereupon,

Thirdly, These bountiful dealings of God with his people are a very firm and solid foundation upon which they may without fear build their comfortable hopes and expectations for Eternity. Mercies to such are like

the widows and orphans by the Lord's mercy, and pay the debts she owed, and upon the rest she was to live. So in mercies which you receive from God, there is the mercy it self to answer the present occasion, to discharge the present expence, and then there is the experience to live upon for the future. Thus the Saints have argued from Gods former dealings with them to his further dealings with them. So David did, 1 Sam. 17. 37. *The Lord that delivered me from the paw of the Lion, and out of the Paw of the Bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine.* And such were the noble and heroick actings of Paul's faith, he having received the same Spirit of Faith, and being at that time under the like influence, 2 Cor. 1. 9, 10. *We had the Sentence of death in our selves, that we should not trust in our selves, but in God which raiseth the dead, who delivered us from so great a death, and doth deliver; in whom we trust, that he will yet deliver.* And the like we meet with in Psal. 23. 5, 6. *Thou preparest a Table before me in the presence of mine enemies, thou anointest mine head with Oyl, my Cup runneth over.* But possibly, David, this will not last, God hath done all for thee that he intends, he will now stay his hand, nay but saith he, I am certain that he will not. *Surely mercy and goodness shall follow me all the days of my life.* Thus they have argued unto further mercies in time, and you may take a further reach and argue from your present experiences to mercies for Eternity, Psal. 84. 11. *The Lord God is a Sun and a Shield.* That our sense speaks him to be. We are now refreshed with his beams, and secured by his shadow, but what will he be, and what will he do? Let faith answer, *he will give grace and glory.* Grace enough for time, and glory enough for ever. Grace to enable us for our duties, glory to satisfy our desires. Grace to fit us for glory, and glory to Compleat and Crown our Grace. These are the proper arguings of faith, and exceeding strong in the hand of a true Believer, the premises are Gods own, and the conclusion drawn from them is undeniable. He is a loving Father to me in this World, and he will be so in the next too. He that now is a fountain opened, sending forth such precious and plentiful Streams, will not then prove a Spring shut up and a Fountain sealed. He that affords me such large Clusters while I am in the wilderness, will not starve nor stint me when I come to Heaven. He that feeds me with *Manna* here will never grudge me the Honey and Milk of the Land of promise. Certainly I shall not there enjoy least where according to the promise I look for most, my God will then do far more abundantly than I am now able to ask or think. These present bountiful dispensations of God to his people are great grounds of high expectations, if we consider,

First, While the People of God are here they are in their Non-age and Minority. There is an apparent and sensible difference between them. In their growth, some are as Cedars, others but Shrubs; and in their strength some are as mighty men to run a race, others can hardly draw their Legs after them. A great deal of difference there is in their knowledge and in their Grace, but both one and other are under age; but when God doth come by death

Children home to Heaven, they are arrived at their ripeness of years. Now if they receive so much from God as they do, and are maintained at such a rate while they are Children, what is it that God designs them for, what is it that he will bestow upon them at last? When you see young ones brought up in Splendor and Bravery, you immediately conclude them to be some great Persons Children; and that they shall have a great Estate, and that something is intended for them suitable to their garb and education. Take your measures from the pains that God takes with his people now, and the cost he is at upon them, and then judge what he hath in his heart and purpose concerning them, *when that which is perfect shall come, that which is imperfect shall be done away*, 1 Cor. 13. 10. When the eye is fully strengthened there shall be no more use of a Glass to see in, which gives but a dark sight. When the heir comes to understand how to manage his Estate, he shall be put into possession of the whole. So when once the Saints come to be perfected in themselves, all imperfections shall be removed from their enjoyments. When once they come to be fit for great things they shall be sure to have them; the inheritance of the Saints in light shall be given them when meet to be made partakers of it. The marriage of the Lamb will come when the Bride hath made her self ready; and the far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory will be laid on when the shoulder is in a Capacity of bearing it.

Secondly, In this life the Children of God are fitting for the enjoyment of that which God intends them. This life is not a season for a full possession, but for the bringing them into a due preparation. And accordingly here they have only their allowances because as yet they are not fit for more. You read in *Esth. 2. 9. That when Esther was brought to the Custody of Hegai the Keeper of the Women, she had the things given her for purification, with all that belonged to her, and seven Maidens that were meet to be given her.* All that was suitable to that State, and no more. It was not before her being thoroughly prepared, purified, and presented to King *Abasuerus* and by him accepted and chosen to be his Wife, that she had the Crown set upon her head, and the Robes and Ensigns of Majesty given her, which were suitable to her advancement and Royal State. Come, Christians, you have now no cause of murmuring and discontent, but of grateful acknowledgements and admirings, God is exceeding gracious, you receive very much, and are daily laden with his benefits; there are blessed allowances which he is pleased to make unto you, such as are suitable to your present condition, day unto day sheweth his love and night unto night his faithfulness, what is the report, what the account that you are obliged to give of him? Must you not say that you have enough to support you under all your burdens, when they are most heavy, enough to maintain you at your work, and to carry you thorough it when most difficult, and also enough to sweeten your bitterest afflictions to you, and such beams of light breaking in upon you, that you can walk thorough darkness, and comfortably proceed in your way

by God, which will prepare you for the Crown of Life and Righteousness, which God the Righteous Judge shall give unto you at that day, and make you meet for the Throne of Glory, unto which you shall be advanced, so that you may become it, and fit you for the presence of God, that you may be brought into it with exceeding joy, that you may be able to bear his presence without terror and trembling, and he to bear you in his presence, without hatred and loathing. In a word, you have that now afforded you by God, which may suit you both to the place, and company, and employment, so that when you come there, there may be an amicable agreement, and perfect harmony, without any thing of jarring and discord, that you may not be weary of Heaven, nor Heaven of you. And do you seriously consider how much this stands God in? what abundance of cost he is at for your preparation, and what a great deal of pains he takes with you in order thereunto; which clearly shews it to be no small or inconsiderable thing which he hath in his everlasting love and kindness designed you for? The beauty of the Wedding Garment, which every one of the Guests must have on in order to his acceptance, doth loudly proclaim the greatness of the Solemnity, and the splendor of the Entertainment; and when once full preparation is made in the Soul, full possession shall be given to it. When once the Vessel is thoroughly cleansed, it shall be filled up to the brim. When once the Divine Spirit hath made you meet, you shall receive the Inheritance of the Saints in Light, *Matth. 25. 10. The Bridegroom came, and they that were ready went in with him to the Marriage, and the door was shut.*

Thirdly, Consider what that life is which God will have his People to live while they are here in the world; viz. the life of Faith; so the Lord himself hath told us, *Hab. 2. 4. Behold his Soul which is lifted up is not upright in him, but the just shall live by his faith.* And this must be at all times, and in all conditions; not only when it is with us as it was then, when *Caldeans*, mighty and cruel Enemies are in the Land, but when they are not; when we have Enemies under our feet, and fulness in our hands, *2 Cor. 5. 7. We, saith the Apostle, walk by faith, and not by sight*; faith leads, faith expects, faith supports, faith comforts. Thus it is with all the Saints; therefore he speaks in the plural number, *we*, meaning both himself and all the followers of the Lamb; and of himself he particularly tells us, *Gal. 2. 20. I am crucified with Christ, nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.* Christ lived in him; all his life came from Christ; he was the Author and Principle of it; he both breathed and maintains it; he it is that quickens me, acts me, moves me how and whither he pleaseth; and whatever that life be which I shall live hereafter, that life which I now live, in this world, in this mortal body and state, I live it by the faith of Christ, in whom I have both righteousness, and life, and strength; for he is, and he is to me *all in all*. And so it is with all the living



sense, more by hope than by having; and yet this present and imperfect life is an exceeding excellent and noble life: It is as much above the life of the most rational man in the world, who is a stranger to the grace of faith, as the life of such a man is above the life of a brute; it brings in to him far more sweetness and pleasure: Hence it is that in the Scripture you read of peace in believing, and of the joys of faith, with which those which the sensualist doth enjoy, are not worthy to be compared, for his peace is but the product of a delusion, his joy as the crackling of thorns under a pot; but this is *peace which passeth all understanding*, Phil. 4. 7. and this joy such as is *unspeakable and full of glory*, 1 Pet. 1. 8. It is too big for words, it hath in it something of the heavenly glory: It is such a joy as doth ravish the Soul, it sometimes puts it into an ecstasie, it fills it up to the height, so that there was one cried out like a man oppress'd under the weight of it, *Stay thy hand, Lord, stay thy hand, for I can hold no more*. Now if there be such abounding delights brought in by the hand of faith, what beams of light and glory will the eye of sight let in to the glorified Soul? If there be such consolations springing, such holy raptures caused from and by that good news that faith brings from that far Countrey, when it hath but a *Pisgah* sight, and that in a Wilderness, and can but peep within the Veil, what will the blessed fruits of a clear Vision and compleat Fruition be, when once the holy Soul is after a long and tedious Journey happily arrived there, and hath free liberty to walk up and down in the length and breadth of that good Land, and to take its fill continually of all that it affords? But once more.

Fourthly and lastly, Here Gods communications and lettings out of himself to his People, are correspondent with, and managed in such a way and manner as shall be pursuant of his purpose and design of keeping them, as in a well-liking and thriving state, so in a longing frame; as to preserve their spirits, and promote their growth, so to maintain their desires in strength and vigour, and also to whet and raise them up to an higher and higher pitch. The perfection which our heavenly Father doth intend the dearest of his Children while they are here, consisteth more in the sincerity of their hearts, and in the fervency of their earnest and industrious desires, than in their actual attainments. Come, Christians, what report can you make? what account can you give of your selves? do not you find that this is the language, and these the breathings of your Souls? O that I might know God more, and come to all the riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ, Col. 2. 2. Oh that I might love him more! that this lukewarm, cold, frozen, Icy heart, might burn within me, and be all on a flame! Oh that I might fear him more, not with a base, servile and slavish fear, but a loyal and godly one, & pay him such a reverence as is his due, & he receives from the glorious *Seraphims* above, and the spirits of just men there made perfect! Oh that I could resemble him more and more, and find the inward man renewed day by day, and my Soul changed into his Image from glory

God, and shewing forth the virtues of my Saviour, shining with his beams, treading in his steps, and being in the world even as he was in the world! O that I could see and enjoy him more! Oh that I could converse and walk with him more! And when he is pleased to open his hand most liberally, they will be reaching out theirs for more, and still crying, *Give, give*. When they have in a Duty, or at an Ordinance, fed most heartily, and received the greatest refreshing, they rise with an appetite, and go away with desires: If you have tasted that the Lord is gracious, you must desire: After-draughts in the Banqueting-house; the Spouse called for flaggons. I say, God in his infinite wisdom doth so order it, that his Children shall be dieted here, that so they may be always hungry. *Not, saith Paul, that I have already attained, or am already perfect*. Now you may safely from hence draw this Inference, That it God be so liberal to his Children here, where yet his purpose and good pleasure is to keep them in the state of expectants, and both to raise and preserve their desires and longings in strength and vigour, that must needs be great goodness which he hath laid up for them in Heaven; What is there behind? What is yet to come? What is that which will be given out to them in the other world, where it is in his heart to compleat their state, and so to order out concerning them, that their transcendent and inconceivable delights shall swallow up all their desires, and their painful longings shall at their first entrance into those glorious Mansions be immediately converted into a fulness of joy? We have now finished the doctrinal parts; it remains that we apply our selves to the practical improvement of them, which is to be the work of every one that reads these few leaves for his own Soul. Only I shall help you a little by speaking to three things in a way of Exhortation.

*Use first.* I do earnestly desire you all, to be without any further unreasonable delays upon your return unto God. Look where you are sinners; in a state of sin and wrath: and is it good to be so? Look whither you are going; is it not to Hell? and do you think it will be good to be there? Do not go on, but stand, sinner, I do in the name of the great God bid thee stand, and come back too; remember from whence you are fallen, and from whom you have departed, and *come back*. The expressions that our Lord Jesus used to the Church his Spouse, come into my mind, *Cant. 6. 13*. He bespeaks her thus; *Return, return, O Shulamite! return, return, that we may look upon thee: What will ye see in the Shulamite? as it were, the company of two Armies*. Let me speak to you in the same manner; only let me first propound to you this one serious and weighty Question; How do you find matters are within you? Is there such a sight as this to be seen? I mean, to be seen in your Souls? Do you feel strugglings in you as *Rebekah* once did in her womb? Is there the company of two Armies? O that there were in some of you! it would be welcom news to me, I should be glad at heart, and with my Soul bless God for it. I know there is one Army in the very worst of men, the greatest Debauchees and vilest Monsters



trenched and fortified themselves, and fight against God, and War against the Soul ; and it is not improbable but that there may be a Legion of Devils too, which side with them, and yet all this while there is no noise, no disturbance of the sinners rest, but he goeth on in his way and enjoys himself ; for, as our *Saviour* hath told us, while the strong man armed keeps the house, his goods are in peace, there is a sinful quietness, though indeed that is a dismal and woful one. But what say you, is there the Company of two Armies in you? Is there a Law in your minds warring against that Law of Sin and Death which is in your members? Is there a Spirit within you lusting against the flesh ; is there a contest and combating within you? And that not only between one faculty and another, but between the same faculty and itself? So that you cannot sin with that freedom and plenary consent that you were wont to do, but you find a reluctancy and opposition in your selves. Oh that it were so with you, that you were able to say, you hate what you do, though you cannot do what you would: And to you I do now call, *return, return, O sinners, return, return.* That we may look upon you and love to look; that your Ministers, and Relations, and Friends, your Parents that have travailed in birth to see Christ formed in you, your dear Yoakfellows who love you, and longed for your Spiritual and Eternal welfare, and have looked upon you with sad hearts, Sighing, Shaking their Heads, wringing their hands and shedding Rivers of tears, may now look upon you with comfort and rejoycing, and count you their blessings ; That when they look upon you they may see your faces *Sion* ward, and Heaven ward, and your feet directed into the ways of peace, and that when God ( who looks from Heaven upon all the Children of men ) doth look upon you, and into you also, he may see your hearts are toward himself, really set for his Service and honour, and the enjoyment of him. You that are Elder, and are yet in your sins, walking on in the vanity of your minds, suffer the word of exhortation, do you return, and that presently, for you have nothing to shew why you should not; you have taken your swing, and rambled far enough, and lived without God long enough ; a man would think you have had your belly full of wind and ashes, and husks, that you have had enough of base sins, and what is worse than childish vanities, and are guilty of such egregious, and ruining follies that you have reason to be weary of them. I beseech you learn to be wise, it is, indeed it is high time, if you will not be wise now, when will you? You that are younger, do ye apply your hearts to true wisdom, come, ye Children, hearken to me, come, ye young-men and maidens, come in to God, who desires you, who calls you, who stands with his arms ready and stretched out to receive you, come to him in whom you will find rest to your Souls, and have such joys as will be great and cheap, and never end in sorrow. It is much more easy for you to return than it is for old sinners, who have grown grey in their rebellion and obstinacy, for you are not gone so far from God as they have done, and you have not so many Chains and Fetters, as Satan and lust and a continued

conceive how exceeding welcom you shall be, how glad Heaven will be of you; Oh how doth God, Father, Son and Spirit embrace the young converts, how ready will the blessed Angels be to watch over you, to encamp about you, to minister to you, and to do you acts of kindness? What hugs and kisses did the affectionate Father bestow upon his repenting and returning Prodigal! He ran to meet him, and that while he was a great way off; he could not sit still when he saw him coming, but must get up himself, and while the good old mans feet did run, I doubt not but his heart leapt within him.

*Use Second.* Under this I shall direct my discourse to you who already are converted, and have hearkened to the voice and calls of God in the Gospel, and come in to him. And you I advise to improve all your experiences to the utmost for the drawing of your hearts more out to God, and bringing you into a closer Communion with him. *Thou hast been my help*, said David, *Psal. 63: 7.* What then? *my Soul followeth after thee.* ver. 8. Because thou hast been my help in work, in trouble hast assisted me in such and in such a case, yea in every case, therefore my Soul now doth and still shall follow hard after thee, that I may have more of thy help as I need it, and more and more of thy self too, so as you have heard in the Text, return unto thy rest, O my Soul, unto that God who is thy rest; for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee. Consider and call to mind, what sights have you had of Gods power and glory in the Sanctuary. What tastes of his sweetness in the banquetting house of Ordinances, what tokens of love sent in, in various ways, what Messages of peace by his holy and blessed Spirit, what returns of prayer by the hand of gracious providences; how great things hath God done for you, confuting your fears, and exceeding your expectations, how good and gracious hath he been to you, compassing you about with his favour as with a Shield, and daily loading you with his benefits? let all this be called in and set before your eyes, and then from all these Topicks reason the case with your selves, and plead with your Souls, yea plead and argue them into a dearer affection to God, and a further return to him, and a nearer, closer Communion with him. The name of Jesus is *as an Ointment poured forth*, Cant. 1. 3. And when the Spouse had once got the scent, and to her comfort and delight felt the savour of it, found that sweetness which was both in his name and in himself, she loved him, her affections presently took wing and made out to him, she run, and yet thought her pace was too slow, and therefore beg'd she might be drawn that so she might run. Her senses had been exercised and pleased with so excellent and glorious an object, and now she was satisfied neither with what she had, nor what she did, she thought her strength was too small, her motions too faint and heavy. She could not rid ground fast enough, and though she followed hard after him, she was yet too far from him. *Draw me, and we will run after thee.* We will run after thee faster than now we do, and get nearer to thee than now we are, and this calling in of divine help was not in vain, it was presently afforded.

in order, and we found the comfortable effect of it, as appears from the next words, *The King hath brought me into his Chambers*, into a most intimate fellowship with him, not only into his Court, but into his Chamber, and there she was willing enough to sit down and rest, yea take up her eternal abode, yea there, but no where else, not at a distance, not at the door, but in the Chamber, in the Bride Chamber of heaven, there *we will be glad and rejoice in thee, and remember thy love more than Wine.*

*Use Third.* I shall speak a little to you who are concerned in the late providence, and others of the same nature, and do your selves feel the smart of that blow which struck your Relations dead. Do you possess your Souls in patience, be quiet, content and satisfied, since you believe them to be returned unto God; though they be dead to you, and you shall know them no more after the flesh, yet they now do, and eternally shall live to God and with him. There are none of you that have been made partakers of a Divine nature, but would fain have your Husbands, Wives and Children, &c. turned from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan, to God; you would have them converted and saved: I do not question but you desire that, and pray for that, and weep for it, and long for it, and it would be the joy and comfort of your Souls to see it; and herein you do exceeding well, there is much of a Gospel-Spirit in it, it doth highly become you, and it is an argument of that dear love which you bear unto them; it is the best and noblest expression of Love. Well, now when their Spirits are returned to that God who gave them; now that they are gone from you to their Father; now that they are so gone as that you shall here see their face no more, and hear their voice no more, and enjoy their Company no more, make it appear that you have been well taught in the School of Christ, and there learned in every State wherein you are, therewith to be content, yea in your solitary and lonesome state. Let them go, since he hath sent for them who hath the best right to them, and in whose hand is the power of life and death, do you freely let them go. Now they have a fulness of joy, and are bathing themselves in Rivers of pleasure, do not you lock up your selves in a dumphish retirement, nor sit down, sullen and discontented, drown'd in tears, oppress'd and overwhelm'd with sorrow; Be not you froward and angry with God for loving them so well as to take them home to himself, and do not you disparage that Heaven where they are triumphing, as if they had changed to their loss. They are dead indeed, but sweeten that thought with a better, even this, that they are gone to God, and so are where they would be. So our Saviour told his Disciples. *I go to my Father and to your Father, to my God and to your God.* Remember, *God dealt bountifully with them.* As in your case who are now made a Widdow indeed. God dealt bountifully with you, in continuing him to you so long, who might much sooner have dissolved your conjugal relation, but he did not, many years you lived, and loved and rejoiced together; and he dealt bountifully with him. I shall pass by his worldly estate, and only mention some other things, not for the commendation of the deceased, but the honour of his great Lord and Master, of whom we can never say too much.

1. He gave him a great measure of life, for he lived to a good old age.
2. He afforded him a great measure of health; for he scarce knew what sickness meant.
3. He had a great measure of Spiritual strength, for as I have been informed, he kept his ground in the midst of Persecutions, and his integrity in the midst of temptations, unto which his very calling did expose him.
4. God blest him with a great measure of patience, so that he was to admiration silent under that blow which consumed him.
5. A great measure of submission, being brought to Gods foot, willing to be at his dispose.
6. A great measure of comfort, there being no Cloud upon his brow, no doubt of his future happiness, but the assurance of Faith. Thus God dealt bountifully with him, and so he doth with other of his faithful Servants, though not with all in all these respects. And we have therefore no reason for excessive sorrow upon their return to God; for that God who dealt bountifully with them on earth will deal satisfyingly with them in Heaven. Here they did see his goodness, there they behold his glory.

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*Books lately Printed for John Dunton at the Raven  
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2. *A Sermon Preached to Young men, Dec. 25. 1689. At that time  
was Mr. Oakes Meeting place.*

3. *A discourse shewing the Duty of Magistrates from the highest to the  
lowest for the suppressing Prophaneness, being one of the Sermons in the New  
Morning-Exercise.*

*All three written by Samuel Slater Minister of the Gospel in London.*

**F I N I S.**

